

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2004

NOVEMBER 16, 2004

Operations and Services

Forensic Services, NWSPD 10-20

ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWSI 10-2004, Accident Notification, dated November 11, 2003. The title has changed to Accident Notification and Response. There have been minor word and editing changes which do not change the guidance of this directive.

SIGNED

November 2, 2004

Gregory A. Mandt

Date

Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services

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1. Objective. This instruction details procedures and responsibilities for National Weather Service (NWS) forecast offices with county warning areas in providing timely, efficient, and factual notification to NWS Headquarters (NWSH) and Regional Headquarters (RH), of any known aviation, marine, or major surface accident where weather is suspected to be a factor.

2. Local Station Pre-accident Planning. NWS offices will coordinate with the nearest National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other appropriate Government offices (e.g., Federal Aviation Administration, United States Coast Guard), and with civil authorities to ensure prompt notification of aircraft, marine or ground mishaps within their area of responsibility when weather is suspected to be a factor. NWS offices will prepare and use an itemized list of local steps taken when notified of such an accident. Being prepared for such an occurrence contributes to efficient investigation support.

3. Procedures Following Notification of an Accident where Weather is Suspected to be a Factor.

3.1 Surface Observations. When notified of an aviation, marine, or major surface accident within a 25 nautical-mile radius of an NWS office having Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) augmentation responsibilities and weather is suspected to be a factor, the office should take, record, and disseminate a special observation in accordance with applicable weather observation instruction handbooks used by NWS. In circumstances where an ASOS platform, whether augmented or completely automated, provides observations at, or nearest to, the mishap site, the NWS office will retrieve the five-minute data for the period one hour either side of the mishap. If the NWS office cannot retrieve the five-minute data, they should request the ASOS Operations and Monitoring Center (AOMC) download the required observations within 11 hours of the accident. This data should be retained for 30 days, except when instructed otherwise by the Forensic Services Manager.

3.2 Notification Reports (Aviation). When notified by the FAA, or otherwise receiving notice of a major aircraft accident, or a known or suspected weather factor accident, the

appropriate NWS office will submit a notification report as soon as possible, except as outlined in the following.

Discretion and judgment will be required in connection with notification reports for missing aircraft and military aircraft accidents. When an aircraft is missing, especially for two to three days or more, the location, time, and/or the weather factor circumstances of the accident may be difficult to ascertain. In general, a report should be submitted when there is the capability to provide factual and best available information to meet the purposes in section 3.2.1. The report should include the best information available at the time without unnecessary delays.

Background information for a military aircraft accident is frequently difficult to obtain. Moreover, military crews normally use weather products generated by the military. The submission of reports related to military accidents should be limited to those cases where sufficient background information is available and the accident is known to have resulted in one or more civilian fatalities or significant property damage.

3.2.1 Purpose. The notification report provides timely, factual, and best available information to the Assistant Administrator for Weather Services and other concerned NWS officials in order for them to:

- a. Brief key officials of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of Commerce;
- b. Respond to queries from outside agencies;
- c. Initiate an internal inquiry, if required; and
- d. Take prompt remedial action, if required.

3.2.2 Initiating Offices. The NWS office with county warning responsibility for the accident location will initiate the notification report. The Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU) initiates reports for qualifying accidents for the entire state of Alaska. For occurrences outside the contiguous 48 states, the NWS office with public warning responsibility for the accident location should initiate a notification report provided it has sufficient information.

3.2.3 Notification from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). FAA Order 8020.11, Aircraft Accident and Incident Notification, Investigation and Reporting, requires the FAA air traffic field facility which receives the first report of an aircraft accident/incident to notify the nearest NWS office. This holds for all formal accidents. As an alternative, a formal agreement between overlapping FAA/NWS regions, FAA Order 8020.11, allows FAA facilities within the signatory FAA region to notify a pre-designated NWS office (per state or states). Further, if acceptable to an FAA region, the appropriate NWS RH can arrange for completing accident notification via automated means, e.g., the FAA's Regional Automated Notification System (RANS), as available.

However, regardless of any notification arrangement in place, if the NWS office receiving

notification from the FAA is NOT the office responsible for issuing the notification report, the receiving NWS office is responsible for passing the information on to the appropriate NWS office as soon as possible.

Formal accidents, as defined by the FAA, fall within one of the following categories:

- a. Air carrier accident,
- b. All accidents causing serious injury or fatality when the flight was operating on an Instrument Flight Rules plan or special Visual Flight Rules plan,
- c. Any accident wherein it is suspected that the FAA's air traffic operations are involved, or
- d. Any accident involving adverse weather when the flight crew was weather-briefed by FAA personnel.

FAA Form 8020-3, "Facility Accident Notification Record," lists the phone numbers of the parties and offices to be notified. The appropriate NWS RH should periodically contact their FAA counterparts to ensure the telephone numbers are correct and up to date. The air traffic field facility involved may be an Air Traffic Control Tower, an Air Route Traffic Control Center, an Automated Flight Service Station, or a Regional Communications Control Center, depending on the circumstances surrounding the accident/incident. The FAA facility report will include the following information (when available):

Flight identification (name of airline, pilot, aircraft type, civil registration number);

Location, date, and time of accident; brief description, including number on board and fatalities;

Source or originator of the report; and

Whether a weather briefing was furnished (and by what office).

3.2.4 Format. Notification reports (known to NWS personnel as OAV) issued by NWS offices will be transmitted in the format below. They should include, but not be confined to, information on all items listed. Do NOT include any conjectures or opinions as to the cause of the accident. If information on an item is unknown or not available, indicate "UNKN" or "N/A," as applicable.

TO:	FORENSIC SERVICES MANAGER (W/OS23) NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE C/O TELECOMMUNICATIONS GATEWAY SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20910
INFO	APPLICABLE RH ... ATTN RAM (OR EQUIVALENT)

ALPHA	IDENTIFICATION OF THE FLIGHT: AIRLINE AND FLIGHT NUMBER, PILOT (IF GENERAL AVIATION), AIRCRAFT TYPE, REGISTRATION NUMBER, ETC.
BRAVO	LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME OF ACCIDENT.
CHARLIE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT, INCLUDING NUMBER ABOARD AND FATALITIES.
DELTA	THE LATEST TRANSMITTED SURFACE OBSERVATION PRIOR TO AND THE FIRST TRANSMITTED OBSERVATION SUBSEQUENT TO THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT FOR NEAREST REPORTING LOCATION(S). FOR ASOS SITES (IF AVAILABLE), INCLUDE THE TWO NEAREST FIVE-MINUTE OBSERVATIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ACCIDENT TIME. INCLUDE STATION IDENTIFIER(S), DATE(S), AND TIMES OF OBSERVATIONS.
ECHO	TERMINAL FORECAST(S) FOR NEAREST LOCATION (IF APPROPRIATE). INCLUDE IDENTIFIER, DATE, AND VALID TIME DESIGNATION.
FOXTROT	LOCAL WINDS ALOFT FROM UPPER-AIR SOUNDINGS AT THE NEAREST UPPER-AIR STATION; AND/OR OTHER AVAILABLE OBSERVED UPPER AIR WIND INFORMATION (E.G., FROM WSR-88D, WIND PROFILERS) IF CONSIDERED TO BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE. FOR LANDING AND TAKE-OFF ACCIDENTS - INCLUDE WINDS UP TO 3000 FEET AGL. FOR OTHER TYPE ACCIDENTS - INCLUDE LEVELS CORRESPONDING TO AIRCRAFT'S SERVICE CEILING, IF KNOWN.
GOLF	AWC/AAWU IN-FLIGHT ADVISORIES AND CENTER WEATHER ADVISORIES IN EFFECT IF READILY AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE DATA BASE (INCLUDING ENTIRE TEXT[S], IF POSSIBLE).
HOTEL	WEATHER BRIEFING/DOCUMENTATION FURNISHED BY (NAME) WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE OR (NAME) FAA FLIGHT SERVICE STATION, IF KNOWN. NEGATIVE STATEMENT, WHERE APPLICABLE.

(NAME, TITLE, OFFICE)

The notification report will express all times, including observation times, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). In Item CHARLIE, the description should be as concise as possible. The author of the report should avoid sensational or graphically descriptive terms regarding the manner of death or extent of injuries.

3.2.5 Method of Transmission. Transmit notification reports via the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS). Initiating offices will use a World Meteorological Organization (WMO) heading and AWIPS Identifier (AI) as directed by NWS Communications Identification Policy. For the notification report issued within the conterminous NWS regions, the WMO heading is “NOUS5i CCCC” where “i” identifies the geographic area and the “CCCC” is the originating office; the AI is “OAVxxx” where “xxx” is the location identifier. The equivalent to “NOUS” in the Alaska Region is “NOAK.” The equivalent in the Pacific Region is “NOHW” and “NOPQ” for Hawaii and Guam respectively. Note: Those NWS offices not yet transitioned to final NWS communication identifications may continue using their existing WMO heading (e.g., ADMN10, ADMN28).

RH officials should use their discretion and good judgment whether a telephone call, in addition to a report, is needed to notify NWSH officials (e.g., a weather-related accident involving an air carrier and resulting in fatalities occurs during non-administrative hours). Home telephone numbers of key NWS officials are included in the current Hydrometeorology Duty Officer Manual maintained by the Performance and Awareness Division in the Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services.

3.3 Notification Report (Marine). An NWS office will submit a notification report anytime the office becomes aware of a suspected weather factor accident or major marine accident has occurred in its forecast area of responsibility. An NWS office should also submit a report anytime the office becomes aware of a missing marine vessel where weather is suspected to be a factor or when it appears the criteria for major marine accident classification may be met when the fate of the vessel is determined.

4. Protection of Records. NWS offices will take the following steps to safeguard weather records in the event of a major accident within its county warning area where weather is a suspected factor:

a. Secure all pertinent service records and other work products issued by the NWS office as soon as possible.

b. Unless specifically requested by NWSH or RH, keep the service records/work products in the NWS office for at least 14 days to provide time for determining:

- (1) To what extent weather is a factor, and
- (2) What weather information is required for investigation purposes.

c. In the absence of a request from NWSH for weather information, process all records in accordance with normal disposition procedures.